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LRS Assessment Report 2011-2012

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LRS Assessment Report 2011-2012

Learning Resources Services

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LRS Assessment Report 2011-2012 **Learning Resources Services**

Introduction

In keeping with the campus-wide emphasis on assessment of student learning, assessment efforts at LRS have continued to focus on student awareness of and satisfaction with services and resources provided by LRS. 2011-2012 was the ninth year of focused assessment for LR&TS and now LRS. Since fall 2009, LRS assessment has focused on one major assessment (rather than two or three) for the academic year. Three major projects have been rotated on a three-year schedule (2010 – LibQUAL+ Survey; 2011 – Miller Center Survey; 2012 – Telephone Survey by SCSU Survey).

Assessment Personnel

Chris Inkster has served as LRS Assessment Coordinator since fall 2005. Robin Ewing will be assuming the Assessment Coordinator role in fall 2012, when Chris Inkster will be on sabbatical. Robin and Chris have worked together to make the transition to this new leadership. Work group leaders have also been active in assessment activities and questions related to their areas.

Telephone Survey Conducted by SCSU Survey

For the academic year 2011-12, the LRS assessment emphasis was on the Telephone Survey. Because the fees for the SCSU Survey were increased significantly due to campus reorganization, the financial obligation for a full-scale telephone survey would have exceeded the assessment budget. In addition, the SCSU Survey was not able to commit to handling a full-scale survey like we have done in the past. Therefore the Assessment Coordinator worked with the Interim Dean to determine how this year's assessment could best be conducted under these circumstances. The Assessment Coordinator then consulted with the SCSU Survey faculty to determine that LRS could have at least three and possibly five questions as part of the Annual Spring Survey of SCSU Students.

Three LRS questions were part of the Annual Spring Survey of SCSU Students, conducted in March 2012 by the SCSU Survey. A total of 510 students from a representative sample answered questions.

The present and incoming Assessment Coordinators met several times to consider the questions to ask in this abbreviated format. Comparing past data from Miller Center Surveys (students who use the building) and Telephone Surveys (students who may or may not use the building) showed similar perceptions of awareness and satisfaction for several years of surveying. Because we had already built long-term data that shows a strong record of student satisfaction with services and resources used, we decided to use this opportunity to ask a different type of question. Megan Oakleaf's recent work on

the value of libraries¹ was used to inform the following questions, which were submitted to the SCSU Survey.

Questions from LRS

1. Miller Center Library resources and services (in the building OR online) have made a positive contribution to my academic learning.

Strongly agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly disagree / Not applicable

2. When I use the library catalog (*MnPALS Plus*) to locate books or library databases (such as *Academic Search Premier*) to locate articles, I am skilled enough to find what I need.

Almost always / Usually / Sometimes / Rarely / Never / Have not used library catalog or library databases

3. How often this semester will you have course assignments that ask you to use library resources such as books or articles?

Very often / Frequently / Sometimes / Rarely / Never

Additional Questions to Add if There is Room in the Survey

4. Miller Center Library resources and services (in the building OR online) were among the reasons that helped me decide to attend SCSU.

Strongly agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly disagree / Not applicable

5. Miller Center Library resources and services (in the building OR online) have contributed to my decision to stay at SCSU.

Strongly agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly disagree / Not applicable

Question 1 was asked to continue to assess students' perceptions of how library services and resources contribute to their academic learning. This question has been asked in some form since the first LR&TS/LRS assessment project. Question 2 has not been used in previous assessments and was included to assess the level of confidence that students have in their research skills. Question 3 was also a new question and was included to ascertain the level of mandatory assignments requiring library resources. Questions 4 and 5 come directly from Oakleaf's work and have not been asked in previous assessments. Unfortunately, the SCSU Survey was able to include only the first three of the five submitted questions in the final survey.

Past discussions with Miller Center employees focusing on previous assessment reports have shown that there is interest in breaking down questions by class standing.

¹ Association of College and Research Libraries. *Value of Academic Libraries: A Comprehensive Research Review and Report*. Researched by Megan Oakleaf. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2010.

Published online at www.acrl.org/value

In the following discussion, the first table for each question indicates overall responses from the various academic classes, based on cross-tabulation data provided by SCSU Survey. Beginning with the 2005-06 assessment report, LR&TS/LRS assessment emphasis has been on the perceptions of *students who have used the services or resources* being assessed. To make the 2011-12 data more comparable to the past six years of data, the second table for each question shows the percentages by class ranking based on the number of students from the class who *used* the services and resources of the library.

Question 1: Miller Center Library resources and services (in the building OR online) have made a positive contribution to my academic learning.

All participants N = 510	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
1. Miller Center Library resources and services (in the building OR online) have made a positive contribution to my academic learning. OVERALL:	46%	44%	3%	1%	4%
...freshmen (n = 93)	47%	52%	0%	0%	0%
...sophomores (n = 86)	55%	42%	4%	0%	0%
...juniors (n = 103)	52%	39%	6%	1%	1%
...seniors (n = 115)	44%	47%	2%	0%	6%
...graduate students (n = 57)	46%	39%	4%	2%	7%

Overall, 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that library resources and services have had a positive impact on their academic learning. Freshmen and seniors were more likely to agree, while sophomores and juniors strongly agreed. “Not applicable” was chosen by 4% and 2% answered “don’t know.”

Those who have used services N = 479	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
1. Miller Center Library resources and services (in the building OR online) have made a positive contribution to my academic learning. OVERALL:	49%	47%	3%	1%	4%
...freshmen (n = 92 users)	48%	52%	0%	0%	0%
...sophomores (n = 86 users)	55%	42%	4%	0%	0%
...juniors (n = 100 users)	53%	40%	6%	1%	1%
...seniors (n = 107 users)	48%	51%	2%	0%	7%
...graduate students (n = 51 users)	51%	43%	4%	2%	7%

When examining the responses of only students who used library resources and services, 96% of users agree or strongly agree, compared to 90% of all responders. The largest changes are in the seniors (99% now agree or strongly agree, compared to 91% of all responders) and graduate students (94% now agree or strongly agree, compared to 85% of all responders).

Question 2: When I use the library catalog (MnPALS Plus) to locate books or library databases (such as Academic Search Premier) to locate articles, I am skilled enough to find what I need.

All participants N = 510	Almost always	Usually	Some- times	Rarely	Never	Not Used
2. When I use the library catalog (MnPALs Plus) to locate books or library databases (such as <i>Academic Search Premier</i>) to locate articles, I am skilled enough to find what I need. OVERALL:	40%	26%	11%	3%	3%	13%
...freshmen (n = 93)	46%	32%	14%	1%	8%	15%
...sophomores (n = 86)	48%	30%	14%	4%	4%	8%
...juniors (n = 103)	50%	29%	12%	7%	3%	11%
...seniors (n = 115)	47%	33%	12%	4%	3%	12%
...graduate students (n = 57)	53%	29%	13%	0%	2%	16%

Of all responders, more than 6 of 10 students (66%) indicated they almost always or usually found what they needed when using the library catalog or databases. In fact, all class ranks indicate that about 4 out of 10 students almost always find what they need, whether they are freshmen or graduate students. Still, more than 1 in 10 indicates they are successful only sometimes. As might be expected, freshmen are the group with the highest percentage of those who never find what they need (8%, or 6 of the 93 freshmen). While more than 10% of juniors and seniors responding indicated they had not used the library catalog or databases, 15% of the freshmen and 16% of graduate students had not done so.

Those who have used services N = 497	Almost always	Usually	Some- times	Rarely	Never	Not Used
2. When I use the library catalog (MnPALs Plus) to locate books or library databases (such as <i>Academic Search Premier</i>) to locate articles, I am skilled enough to find what I need. OVERALL:	41%	27%	11%	3%	3%	14%
...freshmen (n = 79 users)	39%	27%	12%	1%	7%	15%
...sophomores (n = 77 users)	43%	27%	13%	4%	4%	8%
...juniors (n = 90 users)	43%	25%	11%	6%	3%	11%
...seniors (n = 100 users)	41%	29%	11%	4%	3%	12%
...graduate students (n = 47 users)	45%	25%	11%	0%	2%	16%

Examining only students who have used the catalog or databases, percentages of students who usually or almost always find what they need increased from 66% of all responders to 68% of users. However, the self-identified success rate for almost always finding information dropped between 5% (sophomores) and 8% (graduate students), with for all classes declining in almost always finding what they need.

The SCSU Survey data does not include participants' academic majors, so it is difficult to know precisely why 14% of these students do not need to use the library catalog or databases. Some programs provide data for student projects via websites or CDs bundled with textbooks. Also, some large graduate programs (such as the MBA) require a comprehensive test instead of a written project, and this could account in part for the 16% of graduate students who have not used library catalogs or indexes. In the future, it would be interesting to ask if students have had library instruction and what students do next when they do not find what they need.

Question 3: How often this semester will you have course assignments that ask you to use library resources such as books or articles?

All participants N = 510	Very often	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
3. How often this semester will you have course assignments that ask you to use library resources such as books or articles? OVERALL:	17%	19%	26%	23%	13%
...freshmen (n = 93)	11%	18%	30%	25%	16%
...sophomores (n = 86)	12%	15%	30%	32%	10%
...juniors (n = 103)	14%	25%	28%	24%	9%
...seniors (n = 115)	23%	19%	19%	18%	19%
...graduate students (n = 57)	43%	21%	18%	7%	9%

This question was an attempt to understand how much students are asked to use library resources. Almost half (49%) indicate they sometimes or rarely have course assignments that need library resources. Only seniors (23%) and graduate students (43%) indicate at least 2 out of 10 students are at the “very often” level. For freshmen, sophomores, and juniors, the most frequent answer was “sometimes.”

Those who answered the question N = 498	Very often	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
3. How often this semester will you have course assignments that ask you to use library resources such as books or articles? OVERALL:	18%	19%	26%	24%	14%
...freshmen (n = 93)	11%	18%	30%	25%	16%
...sophomores (n = 85)	12%	15%	31%	33%	11%
...juniors (n = 102)	14%	25%	28%	24%	9%
...seniors (n = 114)	23%	19%	19%	19%	19%
...graduate students (n = 55)	44%	22%	18%	7%	9%

Because few students responded “don’t know” to this question, the percentages for users did not change much from the overall responses. Exactly half (50%) responded that they sometimes or rarely had library-related assignments, and those who never had such assignments rose to 14%. Juniors and graduate students (9% for each) indicated they would not have library-related assignments during the term, and almost 2 in 10 (19%) seniors indicated they were not anticipating library-related assignments.

The past several LR&TS/LRS Annual Reports have shown a decline in numbers of books checked out, number of periodicals browsed, number of questions asked at the Reference Desk; many students may turn to Google as their sole research source. Recent campus changes seem to have brought larger class sizes and more group rather than individual projects. In addition, librarians have sensed that fewer students have assignments requiring library research.

As the Assessment Director has considered the results of this question, several problems with the question itself have surfaced. Several LRS faculty looked at these questions before they were submitted, and the SCSU Survey faculty approved all of the questions for format and wording that would “get at” the desired information. Still, the results of this question raise several ambiguities. Among graduate students, in Question 2, 16% said they had not used the catalog or databases, yet only 9% say they will not have an assignment requiring this skill. Do they get by solely on Internet resources? Or have they not yet started assignments due for the spring term? Several graduate programs emphasize writing only in the culminating project, which may also contribute

to 16% of graduate students who rarely or never are expected to use library resources until they get towards the end of their program. At the same time, 66% of graduate students have library-related assignments very often (44%) or frequently (22%).

Also, the fixed choices for this question are focused on *how often* students have these course assignments. It's possible that a student with one substantial research paper due might think of that as "rarely" since it's only one assignment. Or, a student could think of it as "often" because he/she must select a variety of resources during the term. NSSE data from SCSU students (NSSE results are discussed later in this report) indicate that first year students write about 1 paper or report of 20 pages or more, and seniors write about 3 papers or reports of this length. First year students write about 3 papers or reports between 5 – 19 pages, and seniors write less than 5 papers or reports of this length. Both classes write 6 or 7 papers or reports shorter than 5 pages. Unfortunately, it is not clear from the NSSE questions if these papers or reports require library research.

It would be fair to say that the responses for Question 3 indicate that most undergraduate students in the survey were not frequently assigned projects requiring library research. But alas, the Assessment Coordinator regrets that this question and its responses raise additional provocative questions that cannot be readily answered. If this question is asked again in the future, it might be more useful to word the question in a different way, such as:

In how many of your classes this semester will you have an assignment that asks you to use library resources such as books or articles?
0 / 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 or more

Other LRS Assessment Activities

LRS Workgroup Collaborations The LRS Assessment Coordinator assisted the following groups with focused assessment projects: Reference and Library Instruction.

Reference – Reference Desk Evaluation During fall semester, reference librarians asked all patrons to fill out evaluation / satisfaction forms during one week. The forms were tallied and comments were collected on a spreadsheet and analyzed. Each year this survey has been conducted, results are close to 100% satisfaction.

Fall 2011 (n = 56)

Reference Librarian made me feel welcome

Yes – 100%

Reference Librarian helped me learn something today	Yes – 99%
Overall, the Reference Librarian provided satisfactory assistance	Yes –100%
Would you recommend the Reference Desk to a friend?	Yes – 100%

Spring 2010 – not conducted

Reference -- Library Instruction Evaluation In 2011-12, 190 library instruction sessions were presented for more than 4,000 students. In both fall and spring semesters, library instruction presenters asked students to fill out evaluation forms. The forms were tallied and comments were collected on a spreadsheet. Comments were used by instruction librarians to improve future teaching sessions. The student worker who tabulates these assessment forms was not able to complete the final statistics for 2011-12 before she left our employment .

SurveyMonkey Account The Interim Dean approved the purchase of a Select Annual account for library use. The account was set up through the Dean's Office and was managed this year by the Assessment Coordinator. A draft of how the account might be used by LRS employees in the future is drafted but not yet approved. The SurveyMonkey account was used this year to gather data for the E-Books Survey of Undergraduate Students, with just over 100 students responding to the survey. The Assessment Coordinator worked with the designer of this survey to format the questions, launch the survey, and collect the data. The account was also used for several small-scale surveys related to the LRS faculty request for departmental status. The LRS faculty chair surveyed SCSU aspirational peers about their departmental status and organizational features. In spring 2011, LRS faculty were surveyed about teaching preferences using the LRS faculty chair's personal account, and the survey has now been transferred to the LRS account. Access to this account has the potential to provide easy access to information needed by individual faculty researchers and work groups examining issues, as well as assessment projects. The Miller Center Survey used in the past has been converted to SurveyMonkey form and could be used in the future to replace the paper version.

<i>Other SCSU Assessment Data</i>
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National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Several questions from the NSSE survey administered in August 2011 are related to services and resources provided by LRS, though there is not a question that directly refers to the institution's library. The table below summarizes these related questions and responses. The first three items on the table below relate specifically to technology and were included in past analysis of the NSSE; these questions are retained on the following table:

Natl. Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) questions related to LRS services -- Responses for Often or Very Often	FY 07 1st yr	FY 07 Seniors	FY 09 1st yr	FY 09 Seniors	FY 11 1st yr	FY 11 Seniors
Communicated with an instructor via email	76%	84%	78%	89%	79%	86%
Used listserv, chat group, etc., to discuss or complete an assignment	48%	58%	51%	57%	51%	58%
Used computing and information technology	69%	81%	76%	82%	68%	75%
Worked on a culminating senior experience (may have required library resources)		63%		66%		64%
Worked on a paper or project requiring integrating information from various sources					76%	86%
Spent quite a bit of time or very much time studying and on academic work	68%	76%	79%	78%	77%	80%
Read at least five books that were not assigned	13%	23%	26%	23%	17%	22%

The numbers of seniors working on or planning to work on a culminating senior experience dropped two percentage points this year to 64%. Still, this is a significant number of seniors working on a culminating project that may require using library resources. In fact, this number matches fairly closely with the results of this SCSU Survey, which indicated that 61% of seniors had assignments requiring library resources as least “sometimes.”

NSSE data does not allow matching these seniors with their area of study. More than three-fourths of first year students (76%) and a high percentage of seniors (86%) said they had worked on a paper or project requiring integrating information from various sources – it is probably likely that some of these sources were discovered through the library’s print and online resources.

We know from past Miller Center Surveys and Telephone Surveys that using the library’s space for individual and group study is the top reason for using the library, so when students say they spent quite a bit of time or very much time studying and on academic work (77% of first year students and 80% of seniors), it is probable that some of that time might be spent in the Miller Center.

Data from NSSE indicates that students who read books for pleasure tend to have higher GPAs. Last year, 17% of first year students and almost a quarter (22%) of seniors indicated they had read at least five books that were not assigned – perhaps some of those books were from the library collection of print and electronic books.

Unfortunately, no NSSE questions are directly related to the institutional library.

Other campus data sets The most recent data from other campus data sets that have in the past been analyzed by the Assessment Coordinator in order to collect assessment and evaluation data related to library and technology services were unavailable as of the writing of this report (July, 2012). These data sets include Graduating Senior Survey, and possibly material gathered for the First Year Experience project of 2011-12. Data will be analyzed as it becomes publically available. The Office of Institutional Research expects the data by fall 2012.

University Assessment – LRS Report For the past several years, each fall the college assessment coordinators have been required to submit a report to the University Assessment Office summarizing the previous year’s assessment activity. Due to the

reorganization of assessment on the campus, the University Assessment Committee was not active until late spring of 2012. No reports for 2011-12 have been requested.

Beginning with the 2009-2010 LR&TS report, the LR&TS Assessment Coordinator focused this report of assessment results from various assessment projects which indicate students' perceptions of *implicit student learning objectives*, which are the foundation for providing the technology and library resources and services. Implicit student learning outcomes were stated this way in previous reports:

Students who use _____ (LR&TS resource or service) will report satisfaction.

Because these implicit student learning outcomes inform the day-to-day work of LRS, they are included in this year's report even though an official assessment report was not requested by the University Assessment Office this year. Data from the LRS questions on the Spring 2012 SCSU Student Survey were discussed earlier in this report and correspond particularly to the last two questions below.

Library

- Students in **library instruction sessions** will report increased confidence in being able to locate research appropriate for their assignments.
- Students who seek **assistance from the Reference Desk** (in person, by phone, or by email) will report satisfaction with the help they received.
- Students who **use library resources (particularly books and print or online articles)** will report satisfaction.

Overall Satisfaction

- Students who **use the Miller Center** will report that library resources and services have helped with their assignments.
- Students who **use the Miller Center facility** will report overall satisfaction with their visits.

Assessment Coordinator's Comments

The results of assessment and evaluation from the wide variety of data sources in recent years have shown that LRS patrons generally hold a very positive view of LRS services and resources. Overall satisfaction questions continue to indicate that our patrons appreciate the technology and library resources and services provided by LRS in the Miller Center, elsewhere on campus, and to off-campus students and faculty.

Assessment Follow-Up

The Interim LRS Dean, Dean's Advisory Council, and workgroups continue to make use of data gathered by the various recent LRS assessment instruments to inform decisions and guide direction. Typically, each work group decides on the area(s) it would like to emphasize for further investigation, change, or improvement.

The DAC selected *student worker skills and attitudes* as a focus for improvement between 2007 and 2010, when the LibQUAL+ Survey was conducted for the second time. The 2010 LibQUAL+ Survey and the 2011 Miller Center Survey results both indicated satisfaction with Miller Center student workers and other employees. In the LibQUAL+ Survey, only a handful of faculty members mentioned unhelpful student workers. Indeed, the item “Employees are consistently courteous” was rated close to superiority by all LibQUAL+ Survey respondents. In the 2011 Miller Center Survey, 93% of users agreed or strongly agreed that student workers in the MC were generally informed and helpful, and 97% of users agreed or strongly agreed that other Miller Center employees were generally informed and useful. With the constant turnover in student workers in LRS, however, having a student work force that is helpful to campus patrons will continue to require ongoing training and nurturing.

There are many instances where the work groups have anticipated assessment results in advance and had already planned for and in some cases even implemented improvements before the assessment results for 2011 became available in the fall. In fact, continuous improvement is a vital part of the LRS culture and commitment.

In spring 2011, the Assessment Coordinator shared results of the spring 2011 Miller Center Survey with the Dean’s Advisor Council. Two DAC sessions were devoted to discussion of the results, and work groups also discussed results relating to their areas. LRS assessment data was made available as part of the January retreat and the open DAC planning process in spring 2012.

Acknowledgements

The Assessment Coordinator would like to thank all those who have assisted with assessment projects this year. Ruth Zietlow, Interim LRS Dean, was very supportive of all assessment efforts. The Dean’s Advisory Council and work group leaders have all been generous in allowing time for LRS employees to discuss, analyze, and use assessment data for decision-making. Robin Ewing has been especially supportive and helpful as she transitions to the Assessment Coordinator role. Missy Northenscold, Sheila Landucci, Diane R. Schmitt, and Sonja Estwick (all in the LRS Dean’s Office) all provided assistance, especially with *Excel* software and details.

Colleagues across campus who also serve in assessment leadership positions provided encouraging and knowledgeable support and assistance, especially Joe Melcher (former University Assessment Director) and Holly Evers (University Assessment Office support staff).

Since the current LR&TS/LRS Assessment Coordinator began the role in Fall 2005, many work group leaders, faculty, staff, students, and administrators have supported and participated in LR&TS/LRS assessment efforts. All of these people are also appreciated and gratefully acknowledged.